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CBS FACE THE NATION
4 September 1983

HERMAN: Mr. Burt, you are assistant secretary for European affairs, which includes the Soviet Union. What kind of a reasoned, restrained, and yet forceful response to the shooting down of the Korean airliner can we do which may impress the Russians and will have the support of our allies in Europe? BURT: Mr. Herman, let me say, first of all, that the president, as you know, met with the National Security Council on Friday night. We are now consulting very closely with our NATO allies, our friends and allies in Asia. Right now the president is meeting with the congressional leadership. He has been given a set of recommendations. He is studying those recommendations. We think we have a policy firmly in place that is designed to curb Soviet aggression. We are looking at further steps, and the president will be announcing them in the near future. I don't want to go into specifics now because this is not simply a U.S.-Soviet problem. Any measures that the president announces will be designed to win broad based international support, because this is not the United States versus the Soviet Union. It is the Soviet Union versus the world.

From CBS News, Washington, a spontaneous and unrehearsed news interview on Face the Nation with the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Richard Burt. Secretary Burt will be interviewed by CBS News diplomatic correspondent Bob Schieffer, by the New York Times diplomatic correspondent Bernard Gwertzman, and by the moderator, CBS News correspondent George Herman. Our previously announced guest Secretary of Labor Raymond Donovan will not appear on this broadcast. This change of guests was made by CBS News after the shooting down of the Korean airlines jetliner. Face the Nation is produced by CBS News, which is solely responsible for the selection of today's guest and panel.

HERMAN: Secretary Burt, as you pointed out in your first answer, this is not a bilateral problem between the United States and the Soviet Union. The plane was Korean. There were people of all nationalities on board. Who should take the leadership in this? Should this be an American leadership leading the free world in its protest against this killing of so many innocent civilians? BURT: Well, on this issue I think there's a lot of room for leadership by a number of nations. The Koreans, of course, were particularly affected by this action, and they will have a lot to say and do on this issue. The Japanese are very concerned, and they are taking a lead, for example, with us and the Koreans in the emergency U.N. Security Council debate, which is now under way. There is an important American element. A number of Americans were killed, including the U.S. congressman. The aircraft took off from New York, and it was an American aircraft. But the fact is... HERMAN: American-made. BURT: American-made aircraft. But the fact is this really is an international problem. Because what the Soviets have done is violated an international law, and they have undercut, I think, the international norms of civility and safety. And so the, it's important that no one country takes the lead, but the international community as a whole speaks out in unison.

GWERTZMAN: Mr. Burt, there's a lot of questions as to what actually happened. Some people can't believe the Korean airliner could have gone so far off course for so long. Do you have any information at all on what happened? And secondly, is there any reason at all to believe the Soviet charge or suggestion that the Korean plane had some kind of espionage intent, either for the United States or for Korea? BURT: Well, on your first question, we haven't answered all of the questions ourselves. We

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don't have a great deal of information on precisely why the Korean airliner strayed off course. But we do believe that the pilot of that aircraft thought he was on course when he entered Soviet air space. On your second question, I think the answer is a flat no. There is simply nothing that leads us to believe that the Soviets could have concluded that that was a spy aircraft. In fact, the Soviet statements over the last few days have suggested that that aircraft was running without lights. That is flatly wrong. We have information which tells us that the pilot of the Soviet interceptor saw navigation lights onboard that aircraft, including a flashing strobe light. So we're convinced that that aircraft was a commercial airline and there was a very good chance that the Soviet Union fully understood that when they shot at it and destroyed it.

SCHIEFFER: Do they, does the government know at this point what level of the Soviet chain of command the order was given to fire on this plane? BURT: We don't know exactly what level the order was given, but we do know that the Soviet Union has a very centralized command and control structure, that local commanders very rarely take the initiative on such an important decision as shooting down an aircraft.

SCHIEFFER: Well, at this point does it look like the order came from, say, higher than a regional commander? BURT: We're just not able to say precisely.

SCHEIFFER: May I ask just one other technical question? When this first happened, the Pentagon put out reports or told some of the families.... I think Congressman McDonald's family was told that the plane had landed safely. On what was that based? BURT: I just don't know. I think the assumption might have been that the Soviet Union would have carried out what its normal procedures in past circumstances have been, and that is to force the aircraft to the ground. I think no one could believe for a second that that aircraft would have been shot down. HERMAN: This is the first time that I have heard anybody say that we know or have evidence that the Soviet pilot saw strobe lights. Do we have anything on these mysterious stories that the pilot of the Korean airline plane flight 7 sent some confused signals that indicated that he had been signaled or circled by the Soviet pilot and knew something was afoot? BURT: We have no evidence that he knew something was afoot.

HERMAN: He did not report seeing Soviet pilots, to the best of our knowledge? BURT: I'm not aware of any such reports.

GWERTZMAN: In the transmission from the Soviet pilot, did he suggest to the ground controller that he thought he was tracking a spy plane? Did he say it was a commercial airliner, or what kind of identification... BURT: He referred only to a target, and he was being vectored by the Soviet ground controllers to this target. He was clearly on a military mission, and all he is interested in was destroying that target.

HERMAN: You know, a lot of these questions would be ended if we could all see, and published, the text of the communications between the pilots as they were apparently monitored by the Japanese. Is that coming? Will we ever see those texts? BURT: We and the Japanese have already released an unusual amount of information, and I think we will continue to release information when we think it's appropriate.

HERMAN: Texts? BURT: When we think it's appropraite, we will release more information.

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SCHIEFFER: There have been several stories in the last couple of days quoting intelligence officials, some saying that the, that the Soviets may have indeed thought that they, they were on the track of a spy plane. But I take it you say they saw strobe lights. What's your view on that? Do you think that this is a case of mistaken identitiy? BURT: Not at all. I think it's preposterous to think that the Soviets concluded that was a spy plane. We carry out normal military reconnaisance missions in international air space in that area and other areas, just as do the Soviets in other countries. These operations are sometimes connected with what we call national technical means of verification. The United States and Soviet Union have agreed on procedures for monitoring arms control agreements. But the point is that, is that we do not violate Soviet air space in such operations. And I'll remind you that we know the Soviets tracked this aircraft for two-and-a-half hours as it went in and out of Soviet air space, and before destroying the aircraft, the Soviet pilot established visual contact with the aircraft. So it just doesn't wash that this was or could have been seen by the Soviets as a spy plane or a military aircraft.

SHIEFFER: Did, did the Soviet aircraft show up on the, on the Japanese monitors? Were they aware that the plane was being tracked by these planes? And if so, why was no warning given either to the plane, or why did the plane not seem to know they were there? BURT: I don't know if the Soviet aircraft showed up on Japanese or any other monitor immediately. I know that following the incident, people looking at the available information recognized from different sources that Soviet aircraft were in the air. But I don't think we had any immediate indication that that aircraft was under attack.

GWERTZMAN: Mr. Burt, could you project a bit? What does this do to Soviet-American relations? Is it still possible to do business with them? Can we get arms control agreements? What about cultural exchange talks? BURT: Well, I think it's clear that an episode like this has to cast a shadow over the relationship, but it does not mean that our approach, our fundamental approach, policy to the Soviet Union will change. We have in place a very firm, a very tough, and a very realistic policy towards the Soviet Union. It's not as though the Reagan administration's policy towards the Soviets prior to this incident was business as usual. It's just the opposite. We have a policy built on maintaining the military balance, on increasing our strength; a policy based on realism, a recognition that the Soviet Union uses force worldwide, and also a willingness to negotiate. So we will continue to negotiate arms control agreements, because we think they can strengthen our international, our national security if they can be verified and if they provide for, at a minimum, equality.

HERMAN: Mr. Burt, you're the expert, or at least the expert we have here on the Soviet Union. Do they know they've been hurt? BURT: Well, we have no evidence that they know they've been hurt, but their statements are very interesting in that, on the one hand, they continue to evade responsibility for this action, but on the other, implicit in their statements is the recognition that they indeed shot the aircraft down.

HERMAN: But they, they know what's going on in foreign capitals; they're getting all these telegrams; their ambassadors are being called in. Wouldn't you think they have some appreciation of what damage, propoganda damage, or whatever you want to call it, has been done to their image in the world? BURT: I would hope that they would. But on the other hand, one of the very disturbing qualities of the Soviet leadership is that they seem unconcerned about world politicking.

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HERMAN: If they wanted to reverse the damage that has been done, what is the least they could do? What action could they take? What first step would they take that might counter some of the damage that's been done to them? BURT: Well, I think there are several things they can do. First of all, they could come clean, and give us the facts, and explain precisely what happened, and if people are to blame, those people should be punished. Secondly, they owe the world an apology. Thirdly, people have been killed, and I think claims, reparations that I think must be paid to the sufferers, family and others. And finally, we have, we have yet to establish the crash site. We have not recovered the aircraft, more importantly the bodies, and they could help us in this instance.

HERMAN: Were there bodies recovered? BURT: No. We have no evidence to suggest that the Soviets have recovered any bodies.

SCHIEFFER: Secretary of State Schultz is going to Madrid next week and he's going to be meeting with Mr. Gromyko, and the State Department was putting out the story yesterday that he will demand some straight answers from Mr. Gromyko. BURT: That's right.

SCHIEFFER: What if he doesn't get the straight answers? BURT: Well, first of all, we think that we must talk to the Soviet Union at a very level so that Mr. Gromyko and his colleagues, the Soviet Politburo understand how important an issue this is. If we do not get straight answers, then we will continue to consult with our allies and take appropriate actions to demonstrate to the Soviet Union how serious an episode this is.

SCHIEFFER: Well, what is this meeting going to be about? I mean, the Secretary would raise that question first, I would assume, and then what happens after that? BURT: Well, I don't want to go into detail about the meeting. It's a confidential meeting, and to be effective I don't think it's appropriate to talk about it in public. But I think it's clear that the secretary of state has some things on his mind, this issue and other concerns we have about the Soviet Union.

HERMAN: You know, a moment ago you were talking about evidence that the Soviet pilot saw the navigation lights and the flashing strobe light. That shows it was, should have shown any pilot that it was a civilian plane, a jetliner. Why do you suppose, what is your theory, or the State Department's theory? What happened? Why did the Russians shot, shoot it down? Is that a policy decision? Is it something that was happened, that happened by mistake, by miscalculation, as so often happens in these cases? What do you think happened? BURT: Well, the Soviets don't seem very concerned about the fact that under international law under no circumstances does any country have the right to shoot down an unarmed civilian airliner over its own skies, because this was not the first time we've had an episode like this. In 1978 we had a near miss. Two people were killed when a Korean airliner was shot at, but most people survived. So the Soviets have this insatiable security need, this requirement, really, to ignore international public opinion, to, and feel free to use military force the way they see fit... HERMAN: That seems to imply you think it was a deliberate act of policy. BURT: Well, bearing in mind that the the Soviet Union has a very centralized system of making military decisions, it is very hard to escape that notion.

GWERTZMAN: At the same time the secretary will be meeting with Mr. Gromyko, Mr. Nitze will be resuming the arms control talks on medium-range missiles in Geneva. Is there any likelihood at all of any progress in these talks before the NATO countries go ahead with the deployment of the new missiles in December, and does Mr. Nitze have any

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new instructions to pass on to the Soviets? BURT: Well, we hope that progress will be made in those negotiations. Nobody wants to deploy an additional 572 nuclear weapons in Europe. But the Soviet Union, beginning in the mid-1970s, launched an unprovoked nuclear buildup aimed at our allies. And we have told the Soviet Union that unless we have an agreement by the end of the year we will begin deploying comparable systems. We haven't ruled out the possibility for an agreement by the end of the year. One reason we think that, we hope that progress will be made is that very clear message to the Soviets that without an agreement, we will start deployment. As the president and Ambassador Nitze made very clear yesterday, Mr. Nitze will go back, open, flexible, ready to listen to Soviet proposals, and ready for our part to negotiate an agreement providing for equal levels of warheads for both sides.

GWERTZMAN: Can he go beyond the previous stated position that we would negotiate equal positions? In other words, there's been some speculation about the Americans now being willing to perhaps cut the number of Pershing-IIs that would be emplaced in Germany. BURT: Well, what we are doing is reviewing our current position. We have a position in place. We think it's a fair position. We think it's one that the Soviet Union can accept. But Ambassador Nitze does have the power to explore alternatives that the Soviets might suggest.

HERMAN: Can you characterize the situation as progress being made, slow but steady? Will this incident slow it, perhaps? BURT: Well, we hope it doesn't. As I said before, it's cast a shadow over the relationship. But we think arms control is important. The Soviet Union has said that it is a peace loving country and has waged a peace offensive in Europe, and we think that the recent episode stands in fairly stark contrast with Soviet claims. We think that the United States and the alliance as a whole, in fact, are peace loving countries, and our arms control positions in Geneva are designed to reflect this.

HERMAN: You know, a moment ago I asked you a question about do the Russians know they've been hurt. That was a premise that you may not agree with. Have the Russians been hurt in the European countries that come within your field? BURT: I think the Russians have been hurt, and I think we focus sometimes too much on what our response should be, what our reaction should be. The important thing is that they have isolated themselves in the international system. This is a setback for the Soviet Union.

HERMAN: Just one other thing, Mr. Secretary, before I yield to my colleagues. Our White House correspondents tell us the president is going to address the nation tomorrow night. What kind of action, what kind of speech do you imagine this will be? BURT: I think it will be a strong, firm speech. He will want to talk about what steps we are prepared to take together with out allies. But more importantly, I think he will want to describe our overall approach to the Soviet Union.

SCHIEFFER: What really are his options now? We're going ahead with the talks in Geneva; Mr. Shultz is going ahead with his meeting with Mr. Gromyko; there's every indication that the grain agreement is not going to be cancelled; obviously we're not going to declare war on the Soviet Union; we're not going to break diplomatic relations. What really is there left for the United States and the Western allies to do besides condemn this act? BURT: Well, I don't want to preempt the president, but there are measures that we can take in our bilateral relationship, bearing, bearing in mind already that because of Afghanistan and Poland we have already responded to Soviet aggression. But more importantly, there are internationl measures. And I

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think Larry Speakes said recently that the area of international civil aviatiation is one possible area where the international community could demonstrate its outrage.

SCHIEFFER: This would be something like boycotting Soviet airliners, not allowing them to land in Western... BURT: I don't, I don't want to get into details. The important thing is that this response be widespread, that we consult closely with our allies and others so that the international community takes action, not simply the United States.

SCHIEFFER: We have obviously taken the line this far, the government, that it is best to keep talking to the Soviets, even though we condemn this action. But how far does that go? Should the president, should we be interested in having a summit conference next year with Mr. Andropov? There has been some suggestion that that would be a good idea when all this happened. BURT: We can't, we can't answer the question of the summit in abstract. The president's position on this has stayed the same. We are prepared to have such a meeting if it's carefully prepared and the work has been done, and more importantly we have the opportunity to achieve real results in such a summit.

SHCIEFFER: We're still prepared to do that if the meeting is properly... BURT: If it can accomplish something.

GWERTZMAN: Have you had much indication from the allies that in fact they are interested or want concerted action on the international aviation front? BURT: What's clear is that international public opinion is very similar to the American public's reaction. People, people are outraged at this, and we've only begun consultations with other governments. But we certainly hope and expect those governments will be prepared to join us in any actions that we would plan to take.

HERMAN: You mentioned the outrage around the world. Is there a possible danger.... This may seem a trifle overblown, but is there a possible danger that the actions that this administration and its allies may seem to find that they can finally take will not be up to the heat and the nature of the rhetoric that we've been hearing, the secretary of state calling this an appalling crime, the president using similar language. If, after all, that it's just a question of stopping to refuse Aeroflot flights, or something of that sort, that doesn't quite match the outrage that you mentioned yourself a moment ago. BURT: Again, I don't want to prejudge what the president will say, what actions we will discuss with our friends. The important point, again, is what the Soviets have done and what the Soviet action itself means for the Soviet standing in the international community. They have set back their position, their cause considerably. Because while they use words to express their hopes for the international community, their deeds stand in very stark contrast.

HERMAN: How does that setback translate into policy or action, or change of votes in one of the European countries? What's likely to happen? Everybody seems to agree that it's a setback, but I don't understand in real terms what kind of a setback? BURT: Well, I think we'll have to see in the weeks and months ahead. But I think it's very difficult to believe that the Soviet Union is going to be very credible in the disarmament area and other areas in talking about peace when it's so very clear that its primary instrument is military power.

GWERTZMAN: If I could ask a question about another country, have any of the results of the post-July events in Poland led the administration to think it'd be worthwhile to think about relaxing some of the sanctions? BURT: Well, we are monitoring the situation the, the Polish government has set, that they are going to release the vast

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majority of political prisoners. And we have said that we would be prepared to respond to that. We're now monitoring, again, that situation to see if in fact they have released the vast majority of them. We haven't reached a conclusion yet.

HERMAN: Is there any carryover? I mean, would it look awkward to release sanctions against the Polish government in the light of the Korean airplane? BURT: Well, our sanctions against Poland are really based on the Polish situation. Our fundamental objective there is to restore the situation that existed before the imposition of martial law. HERMAN: Is there any way that this Korean plane incident can help the United States, say, in getting its missiles into Europe despite the objections of the opponents in European countries? BURT: Well, we would hope that this would have a sobering impact on people's attitudes about the United States and the Soviet Union. There is an easy tendancy for people to compare the two superpowers, to say tat they're both military mighty countries that are trying to supress others. I think this episode makes very clear that there is a big and important difference between the United States and the Soviet Union.

HERMAN: Well, it may to us, but do you see signs yet that it is making any difference in some of the opposition parties in the European countries, in West Germany? BURT: The press reviews we've seen have been very strong. I think that both left-wing and conservative parties in Europe are outraged by this action. It's very hard to find anyone who can justify what the Soviet Union has done.

HERMAN: Thank you very much, Secretary Burt, for being our guest today on Face the Nation.

ABC NIGHTLINE
6 September 1983

KOPPEL: Good evening. I'm Ted Koppel and this is Nightline. Gennadi\Gerasimov is a Soviet political analyst and political commentator for the Soviet News Agency Novosti. He is with us tonight live from Moscow. Ambassador\Jeane\Kirkpatrick is the United States representative at the United Nations. She is with us tonight live from New York. Our topic: today's acknowledgment by the Soviet Union that it did indeed, in the Soviets' words, 'terminate' Korean Air Lines Flight 007.

KOPPEL: The Soviets have finally admitted in very circumspect language that their military did indeed shoot down that Korean airliner. But why remains something of a mystery. The Soviets charge that the plane was involved in some kind of U.S. espionage attempt. That may sound compelling in Moscow, but here in Washington, even among officials of previous administrations with no love for Ronald Reagan, the charge is dismissed as unconvincing. There is believed to be little or nothing that could be learned through the use of that Korean 747 that couldn't be more efficiently learned through satellites, listening posts or military reconnaissance aircraft, which would seem to suggest that the Soviets are guilty of incredible brutality, unbelievable incompetence, or possibly both. Joining us live now to discuss those possibilities or some others I may have overlooked are, from New York, Washington's ambassador to the United Nations, Jeane Kirkpatrick, and from Moscow, Gennadi Gerasimov, analyst and commentator for the Soviet news agency Novosti. Mr. Gerasimov, I would assume that you have some other explanation. Why was the plane shot down? GENNADI GERASIMOV (Soviet Political Analyst): Well, the plane was shot down because it was in the Soviet airspace and the pilot didn't know it was, it was a civilian air, airliner.

KOPPEL: Does it surprise you to learn that there have been some Soviet aircraft in American airspace and they have not been shot down for the simple reason that most civilized nations do not do that, especially when dealing with a civilian aircraft? GERASIMOV: Well, I don't about the cases that the Soviet airlines were, uh, were, un-, un-, unidentified and, uh, were stopped in American airspace. I don't know about this accident. The problem with it with this particular accident is that the, the Soviet pilot didn't recognize that it was a civilian plane. And it was, uh, over, as they say in the, uh, the statement of the Soviet government which was announced yesterday, the plane was over, and now I quote from, uh, Pravda newspaper, uh, 'the most important base of strategic forces of the Soviet Union.'

KOPPEL: Mr. Gerasimov... GERASIMOV: Maybe this is the explanation.

KOPPEL: Uh, I'm no pilot and obviously no expert on the silhouettes of aircraft, but I suspect that... GERASIMOV: Well, the Soviet Union...

KOPPEL: I suspect that even you would know the difference between a 747, uh, and, uh, a reconnaissance aircraft. They don't look anything like each other, at least not by visual sightings. GERASIMOV: I don't know how the, how the reconnaissance, uh, RC-135...

KOPPEL: ...135. It looks very much like a Boeing 707. GERASIMOV: I don't know how it looks like. Uh, I do know how Boeing 747 looks like. I was flying on it. But,

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uh, as they say, our military people, uh, say, uh, that, uh, the radar signature, as they call it, is the same.

KOPPEL: Yes. That, that... GERASIMOV: So on radar screen it was the same.

KOPPEL: On the radar screens I think you're probably correct, because I've heard the same thing from American specialists. But your pilots, the pilots of the SU-15s, the pilots of the MiG 23s, they, uh, had this plane in visual sighting. They were only, uh, I believe I heard the pilot say in the tapes that we've heard, only two kilometers away on a fairly bright, moonlit night. One would assume that a professional military pilot could tell the difference. GERASIMOV: Well, the, the plane was behaving very strangely, and, uh, yesterday on, uh, Soviet TV I asked, uh, your president, uh, uh, six questions, and one of them was why the behavior of the plane was so strange. It didn't answer, uh, radio, radio. It didn't follow the, uh, the maneuvers of Soviet planes. So it was behaving as if it was, uh, something very strange, a spy plane, and it was over very sensitive area. All this is very unfortunate, by the way. Uh, the whole thing that happened. But, uh, uh, to begin with, which number one was, why it could deviate, uh, into Soviet airspace. It's the most modern plane civil aviation, and, uh, many pilots who use this plane, they say it is technically next to impossible to, to lose your way, so to say, there on this particular plane. so, uh, the Soviet side maybe was thinking that it was a, an intentional flight over Soviet territory.

KOPPEL: Even if it were, Mr. Gerasimov, and in a moment, uh, I, I assume first of all that when you say that you asked the questions of President Reagan, these are more or less rhetorical questions which you would like to have answered by the U.S. government. In a moment I'll pose a couple of those questions, if you like, to Ambassador Kirkpatrick. But let me just ask you one final question, uh, and we will be coming back to you later in the broadcast, but for the moment, one final question. Let us assume, and I don't think there's any argument, that the 747 was indeed over Soviet territory way beyond your border. Nevertheless it was a civilian aircraft with 269 civilian passengers. One would assume that your military would take some care in distinguishing between that kind of an aircraft and military reconnaissance plane. Simply because it's over Soviet airspace doesn't, one would think, give the Soviet Union the right to shoot the plane down. GERASIMOV: Well, the Soviet government issued several statements, uh, a series of them, and, uh, from the very beginning to the last statement, uh, it is that, that they didn't identify the plane at the moment of this unfortunate accident. They didn't identify it as a civilian plane. And the Soviet government expressed twice, expressed its regret and deep sorrow for the loss of life.

KOPPEL: Actually, the Soviet government has issued a number of statements over the last few days, some of which seem to contradict the earlier statements. Today, only five days after the plane was shot down, for the first time your government decided that indeed it did shoot down the plane. Why did they take so long to find that out? GERASIMOV: Well, if you read our statements before that, uh, it was tacitly there that, for instance...

KOPPEL: Well, it said the plane disappeared. GERASIMOV: Uh, disappeared...

KOPPEL: ...as though it, as though it were an act of God. GERASIMOV: The Soviet government expressed its regret for the loss of life. But you see, maybe it was a kind of... First of all, maybe they were gathering information. And second, maybe it was a kind of waiting for the American side to say something. And for instance, your

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side was silent about your spy plane being in the area for several days. So you see, maybe we're waiting for something else to develop.

KOPPEL: Why, uh, Mr. Gerasimov, since the, uh, American reconnaissance plane was flying in international airspace, why was it necessary to wait for the American government to acknowledge that? GERASIMOV: Well, uh, that I don't know the answer to that question. Maybe, you see, we knew from the very beginning that there were two planes in the air. And, uh, the observation was established, uh, to both planes, so to say. Excuse my English. Uh, but we didn't say it in the beginning, so we kept this particular piece of information until the American side admitted. So maybe this explains why we were a little bit late with the latest statement.

KOPPEL: Uh, you were talking about your government having tacitly admitted that it shot down the plane. The fact that it has expressed regrets, is that like a tacit apology? GERASIMOV: It's not an apology. See, it's, uh, for us, the whole unfortunate episode is, uh, looks completely different. Uh, my government sees in this very big provocation because, as maybe I will have time in this to enumerate six points of mine, uh, because of these six points we think that it was an intentional flight over Soviet territory by a civilian plane which was also a spy plane. And the purpose of it was, first, if it succeeds, to see if it's possible to use civilian planes for spy purposes, and second, if it fails, as it really did, then to raise hell and to use it for undermining the international situation, to use it for, to use it to prove again that your government, your administration is right, uh, in its cause of peace through threats and its harsh attitude toward the Soviet Union, uh, with these barbarians, as your president put it. So to use it for political purposes, uh, to undermine the international situation.

KOPPEL: All right, Mr. Gerasimov, that's just one of many interesting points that we will indeed have a chance to discuss a little bit further. In a moment we'll turn to the United Nations Security Council where today Ambassador Kirkpatrick charged the Soviets with calculated actions that shocked the world, and where today the United States played tape recordings of the Soviet pilots during the final moments of Korean Air Lines Flight 007. And we'll talk with Ambassador Kirkpatrick. (Partial playing of the tapes referred to above)

KOPPEL: Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick is with us in New York. It was she who today spearheaded the U.S. diplomatic assault on the Soviet attack on that Korean airliner. And in a moment we'll be talking to Mrs. Kirkpatrick live. Who provoked whom in the destruction of the Korean airliner went before the Security Council of the United Nations today. U.S. Ambassador Kirkpatrick played a recording, illustrated with video tape, of the Soviet fighter pilot's communication with his ground control before he fired the missile that terminated Flight 007. It was, as Marilyn Berger reports, reminiscent of a similar episode nearly 21 years ago when Ambassador Adlai Stephenson confronted the Russians with U.S. evidence and demanded an explanation.

(Videotape of Adlai Stephenson addressing the Security Council) ADLAI STEPHENSON (U.S. Ambassador to UN): All right, sir, let me ask you one simple question. Do you, Ambassador Zorin, deny that the USSR has placed and is placing medium- and intermediate-range missiles and sites in Cuba? Yes or no. Don't wait for the translation, yes or no? VALERIAN ZORIN (USSR Ambassador to UN) (through translator): I'm not in an American courtroom, sir, and therefore I do not wish to answer a question that is put to me in the fashion in which prosecutor does. In due course, sir, you will have your reply. STEPHENSON: I'm prepared to wait for my answer until hell freezes over if that's your decision.

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BERGER: Today in one of the most dramatic meetings held in the Security Council since that exchange 21 years ago, U.S. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, unlike her predecessor Adlai Stephenson chose not to wait until hell freezes over for an answer from the Soviet Union, this time about the ill-fated Korean airliner. She provided a videotape with the answers. JEANE KIRKPATRICK (U.S. Ambassador to UN): On this tape you will hear the voices of pilots of Soviet interceptors which included three SU-15 *Flagons and one MiG-23 *Flogger, including the SU-15 pilot who pulled the trigger which released the missile which destroyed the Korean Air Lines Flight 007. (The words of the Soviet pilot are heard in Russian and are being translated into English. Screen displays the transmission both in English and in Russian) PILOT: The target's strobe light is blinking. I see it visually and on radar. The target isn't responding to IFF. The A.N.O. (Air Navigation Lights) are burning. The strobe light is flashing. I've already approached the target to a distance of about two kilometers. The target is decreasing speed. I'm dropping back, now I will try a rocket. I'm closing on the target. I'm in lock-on. I've executed the launch. The target is destroyed. I'm breaking off attack.

BERGER: Those voices demonstrated that the Korean plane's lights were flashing when the Russians said its lights were off, that it was staying on course and decreasing its speed when the Russians insist it was trying to avoid pursuit, and contradicted a Soviet allegation that the Russian pilots could not see the plane because of poor visibility. This morning, Soviet ambassador Oleg Troyanovsky was still repeating the party line. But it was yesterday's party line, already being contradicted in Moscow practically at the moment he spoke. At first he refused to acknowledge that Russian fighters had shot down a Korean airliner. Then, in the afternoon, when he got word that Moscow had admitted downing the plane, Troyanovsky had an excuse prepared. OLEG TROYANOVSKY (USSR Ambassador to UN) (through translator): The Soviet pilots, in stopping the actions of the intruder plane, could not know that it was a civilian aircraft. It was flying without navigation lights in the height of night in conditions of bad visibility and was not answering the signals.

BERGER: Then Korean ambassador Kim accused the Soviet Union of inventing lies, saying that no one could confuse the Korean 747 for an American reconnaissance jet. AMB. MYUNG WON KIM (South Korean Rep. to UN): Unless the Soviet fighter pilot, uh, exclusively recruited only from those with seriously defective eyesight, itis impossible to imagine that they could have mistaken one plane for the other.

BERGER: In a council that has resounded for years with anti-American rhetoric, the words had suddenly changed. Marilyn Berger for Nightline at the United Nations.

KOPPEL: Joining us live now from New York, Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick. Mrs. Kirkpatrick, do you have any idea yet, five days after the fact, why that Korean airliner was so far off course? JEANE KIRKPATRICK (U.S. Ambassador to UN): No, we don't. The fact is, there are really only two possibilities. We know that it had three computerized navigational devices and either there was a human error in programming those computers or else there was a mechanical failure. But we really don't know and I don't suppose we ever will know. One of the many problems about the Soviet behavior is that they're not permitting either us or the Japanese or the Koreans or anybody to assist in the search mission to try to retrieve any of the kinds of evidence that might give us some answers to that. You know, even today the Soviets have never shared the black box which would have helped explain the 1978 Korean Air Line disaster.

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KOPPEL: What you're referring to is back in '78 when they shot down another Korean...
KIRKPATRICK: Right.

KOPPEL: ...airliner. That, that one crashed on the ice and only two people were killed. KIRKPATRICK: Exactly.

KOPPEL: Let, let me ask you, because if there is any aspect to this story about which the American audience might be queasy with regard to its own government's activity, it is the delay in admitting that there was an RC-135 American reconnaissance plane in the area. Why did it take so long for the administration to admit that? KIRKPATRICK: Actually there wasn't an American aerial reconnaissance in the area...

KOPPEL: Not when it was shot down. But it was in the area before that. KIRKPATRICK: Right. Well, it depends on what you mean by 'in the area,' because as I made clear today and as the president made clear, when the Korean airliner was shot down, the Korean airliner was shot down over Soviet airspace. The U.S. aerial reconnaissance was never near Soviet... Well, it was never in Soviet airspace or, or even brushed the edges of it, really. When the Korean airliner was shot down the American aerial reocnnaissance plane had already landed an hour earlier, 1,500 miles away. So, I don't know, you know, I just don't think you call that 'in the area,' in fact.

KOPPEL: No, not anymore. But we know, because you and others in the administration have told us, that that reconnaissance plane was, in point of fact, in the same vicinity as the Korean 747 during the two and a half hours. at some point during that two-and-a-half-hour period, uh, during which the Soviets were in fact tracking the plane. KIRKPATRICK: Well, at the beginning, actually, of the two-and-a-half-hour period when, before they were over Soviet airspace at all. And the Soviets knew that there were two planes. We just heard that from the other guest on your show. The Soviets knew perfectly well that there were two planes there, so there never was really any confusion about whether there was a, you know, whether there were two planes, or... We never were in the area that they were pursuing or shooting down anybody. It's, uh, it literally wasn't relevant.

KOPPEL: I am told by, by, by specialists in the field that sometimes large commercial aircraft like that 747 are, in effect, used for shielding a reconnaissance plane from enemy radar tracking, that they're for, for masking, in effect. Is that true? KIRKPATRICK: Well, I don't know, I'm not an expert in that field. If you say sometimes, I'm sure that's not the case here because the Korean airliner was on a course which is an abso-... should... The route that it was flying and should've stayed on is a route that is, uh, absolutely routine and flown by dozens of flights, literally.

KOPPEL: But of course it wasn't on that route. KIRKPATRICK: No, but it was in the beginning, and it was in, at a point that it, for example, uh, tracked, was intersected with the American aerial reconnaissance. The American aerial reconnaissance plane was on, again, on a routine route which it tries to verify SALT, uh, verfication, SALT treaty verification. Uh, and as I understand it, in any case, the Soviets know what our aerial reconnaissance flight courses are, just as we know what theirs are, and so there just wouldn't've been any question at all of, uh, confusion about that. The Soviets understood that there were two planes there very briefly in international airspace. They know what our routes are, they knew what the other routes were.

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KOPPEL: All right. We've gotta take a break, Madame Ambassador. When we return we'll resume our live discussion with Soviet political analyst Gennadi Gerasimov in Moscow and with UN Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick in New York.

KOPPEL: Joining us once again live from Moscow, Genaddi Gerasimov, political commentator for the Soviet news agency Novosti. Mr. Gerasmiov, let me try again. Your government has conceded that it shot the plane down. It has expressed regrets that it happened. Is anyone prepared to acknowledge yet that a mistake was made? GERASIMOV: You see, the pilot was acting according to his instructions. So, I'm not sure that anybody is prepared. And the responsibility, as we see, lies with somebody who sent this spy plane into our airspace.

KOPPEL: Now, you're going to have to explain that, if you would, in somewhat greater detail, because I don't know that any evidence has been presented yet--perhaps you'll present the first of it tonight--that this was indeed a spy plane. GERASIMOV: Well, I don't have direct evidence. I have questions which were not answered, and two of them were already touched upon by, by Mrs. Ambassador. And one is there is no answer to the question why this plane, which is as I have said tehnicaly superior and have navigation systems, several of them, why this plane was, had this deviation from the usual course. The question is not answered. The second question about the second plane, I don't think the answer is satisfactory, because it, well, you may say it's a routine flight. But at some point it was in the same area, and of course it could complicate the picture for Soviet military authorities in the region.

KOPPEL: Well, let me just stop you for one moment, Mr. Gerasimov, because, ah, as Ambassador Kirkpatrick indicated a moment ago, we have a number of treaties between our two countries, and in order to verify that each side is adhering to the terms of those treaties, each country is entitled to pursue what are called I believe national means of varification. GERASMIOV: Right.

KOPPEL: That refers to satellites. GERASIMOV: That's correct.

KOPPEL: It refers to reconnaissance aircraft. So, you know very well that these kinds of reconnaissance aircraft are in your area, and you also know the commercial aircraft flying in the area. It seems to be an enormous leap of logic to be able to go from one to the shooting down of another. GERASIMOV: Well, I don't dispute that, ah, that there are national means of varification. But it's one thing to use satellites, which are permitted, or maybe to use planes far off from the Soviet airspace. And it's quite another thing to use this particular reason to send the spy planes into the Soviet territory, which happens sometimes, you U-2 incident and others. I don't think....

KOPPEL: This was what 23 years ago, 24 years ago? GERASIMOV: Still I remember.

KOPPEL: It still rankles with the Soviet Union. I guess then it's fair to point out that this is the second time the Soviet Union has shot down a commercial airliner in only five years. Is that an accident? GERASIMOV: Well, but it's not an accident because it was just, there were many, many circumstances put together and the presence of an additional spy plane in the region was one of them. And, ah, it was close to the commercial airliner. And I don't think that it is a rule in civil aviation to escort civil airlines with military ones.

KOPPEL: Ambassador Kirkpatrick? GERASIMOV: And this was the case. KIRKPATRICK: It's just appalling. It's like saying that a plane that lands in Chicago an hour in

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advance of one that lands in San Francisco could be, as it were, legitimately confused with being, having been in the air at one point an hour and a half before over Omaha or something. GERASIMOV: I am not saying that, ah, there was a confusion there. KIRKPATRICK: It's, ah, you know, and furthermore I think the Soviets keep tryin....

KOPPEL: Mr. Gerasimov, if you'd be good enough to let the ambassador finish first, then I'll give you an opportunity to respond. KIRKPATRICK: You know I think that the Soviets.... GERASIMOV: I'm not saying, well.... KIRKPATRICK: I think that the Soviet Union is trying to call the Korean airliner a spy plane. And we know it was over Soviet territory. We know it strayed over Soviet territory. And by calling it a spy plane again and again and again to leave an impression that they, you know, that there's some reason to believe it was a spy plane, when there's absolutely no reason to believe that at all, anymore than any other commercial airliner. GERASIMOV: You see, you, you must imagine the situation and the duration. It was for two hours and a half. And during this two hours and a half there were plenty of incidents of complications, and one of them was that your reconnaissance plane met somewhere in the area or just immediately before the Korean airliner entered the Soviet airspace, met with your spy plane, who was detected by Soviet radar.

KOPPEL: You see, Mr. Gerasimov, that's.... GERASIMOV: I'm not say that there was a case of mistaken identity. I'm saying that is just one of the complications which are coming to the whole picture. The other complications.....

KOPPEL: Now, I guess one of the, one of the complications that that troubles me, Mr. Gerasimov, is if for example the Soviet SU-15 had shot down the 747 at the same time that it was in the region with the reconnaissance plane, one might, I suppose, by, by torturing logic just a little big, be able to excuse the act. But it didn't happen until about an hour and a half later when the plane had long since landed at another air base in Alaska. Now, how do you.... GERASIMOV: It didn't....

KOPPEL: How do you use the one to justify the other. GERASIMOV: I know that. I didn't invalidate my argument, which is that it was one of the complications which came into the picture.

KOPPEL: Tell us about some of the other complications. Maybe, maybe they'll be a little more compelling. GERASIMOV: Yes, the other complication, I mentioned the first one, the plane straying of course. Now, the other public, complication is that the plane didn't answer, didn't answer on the radio or from the ground and from the Soviet pilots. He didn't answer. He didn't follow the maneuvers. So, he's, it's behavior could look very strange for a Soviet pilot. This, ah, so, the third complication is that, as I mentioned, the plane was over extremely sensitive area.

KOPPEL: All right, Mr. Gerasimov, if you'll forgive me, excuse me, we have to take a break for just a moment. I'll be back with you and with Mrs. Kirkpatrick in just a moment.

KOPPEL: With us again now from our New York studios, the United States Ambassdor to the U.N. Jeane Kirkpatrick and in Moscow, Soviet political analyst, Gennadi Gerasimov. Madam Ambassador, Mr. Gerasimov raised an interesting point a moment ago. Why do you think it was that the Korean plane did not answer Soviet inquiries, or whre there any Soviet inquires? KIRKPATRICK: We don't know that there were any Soviet inquiries at all. We don have any, nothing on the tape suggests that there were Soviet inquiries to the plane during the 20 minutes, roughly, 50 minutes that it was, before it was

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destroyed. We, we think that the Soviet plane don't have the standard international emergency frequency.

KOPPEL: Because.... KIRKPATRICK: Which would have enabled them to contact the Korean airliner in fact.

KOPPEL: Why is that? I mean, why do they not.... KIRKPATRICK: Well, we think the reason is that they fear that Soviet pilots might defect, might use that international emergency frequency to establish contact with other people and defect. In any case, we don't think they have it. GERASIMOV: May I make a point of order here? KIRKPATRICK: But we, just a minute please. We also, we have no evidence, the tape shows no serious effort at all to identify the Korean airliner or show the ground raising no questions about what kind of a plane it is, and the Soviet interceptor fighters raising no questions really about who it is. It simply shows them tracking and deciding to destroy and destroying. And that maybe is the most shocking thing of all about the tape, is the lack of concern about who it was they were trying to blast out of the sky.

KOPPEL: Go ahead, Mr. Garasimov. GERASIMOV: Well, first of all, I would like to mention that though your president said in his speech that Soviet fighter planes are not equipped with this particular radio which works on this special wave length, one to point point five megahertz. They, actually they are equipped, and it was mentioned in the statement made by the Soviet government. So, it's just the statement of fact. So, they had this particular facility, and they used it, I suppose.

KOPPEL: Mr.... KIRKPATRICK: Well, actually, they didn't, if I may say so. If, ah, because we do have perfectly reliable electronic tape recordings of the conversations from the Soviet pilots, and they did not make such inquiries.

KOPPEL: I'll tell you what, let me, let me put the question in another way, Mr. Gerasimov. I would assume that the Soviet government has access to tape recorders also and presumably they would have tapes of those conversations. It would be very dramatic if the Soviet government produced those tapes. Do you think they have them? GERASIMOV: That I don't really know. I simply don't know. But you see, we had this accident in action, so to say, for two hours and a half. And with modern communications, it was pretty easy for somebody somewhere in Washington or Tokyo to take up the telephone receiver and to call Moscow and to explain the whole thing and why not, why the hotline was not used in this particular case to stop this tragedy.

KOPPEL: You think this is an appropriate use for the hotline? I mean, first of all, I'm not sure that the tapes had made their way all the way back to the, to the decision-making people in Washington before the plane was shot down. But I suppose more to the point, Mr. Gerasimov, is that no one in Washington would have thought that your government was going to shoot the plane down. You think that might be a reason - for not calling them? GERASIMOV: Ah, you see, if the information was there that the plane was over the Soviet territory, I guess it's a valid reason to use any communication link available.

KOPPEL: Let me ask the question.... GERASIMOV: Do you see, and it....

KOPPEL: Let me ask the question very bluntly, Mr. Gerasimov, ah. GERASIMOV: Yes.

KOPPEL: Now that you know that it was indeed a civilian aircraft, now that you know that 269 civilians died, do you think it was appropriate to shoot it down? GERASIMOV:

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Of course not. I would say it in this way, that if the Soviet pilot knew for sure it was not a spy plane, it was a civilian plane, he had to try again to, to land it and but then, I saw the plane was behaving very strangely maneuvering and didn't want to follow the orders. And that's why he assumed that it was a spy plane. Also, I would like to add that there is information now which was not there but which is now available after this accident, that the commercial airlines are routinely used for gathering information. And in the beginning of the program it was mentioned by you that we have satellites, so why worry about planes.

KOPPEL: Well, we have satellites and reconnaissance aircraft. GERASIMOV: Yes.

KOPPEL: So, why worry about a commercial aircraft. GERASIMOV: I'm not, I am not a specialist in the field, but I've read in your newspapers and in our newspapers that even though you have very good satellites, planes are even better for some details of reconnaissance business. And they are used, commercial airlines, over friendly countries to the United States, they are supplied with certain, ah, certain equipment, spy equipment near a military base somewhere. I guess it's...(inaudible). I don't know.

KOPPEL: Mrs. Kirkpatrick, it, it seems like a direct charge. You want to respond to it? KIRKPATRICK: No, of course. I mean, absolutely not. The United States would not, would not even consider, would not even consider using commercial airliners that carry passengers for any kind of intelligence gather of reconnaissance information. That's just an outrageous, absolute fabrication, which again is just designed to justify what was a perfectly brutal decision on the part of the Soviet Union to shoot down an airplane, which either it knew was a commercial airliner carrying 269 passengers or it didn't know and it simply didn't care whom it shot down. You know, there are some agreed upon international standards about what countries should do in case they find an airliner that's strayed over their territory. They should try to identify it. They should take every measure. If they think it's serious, then they should try to escort it out of their territory or force it to land, in an extreme case. The Soviets simply did none of those things. They just, you know, they followed a policy of shoot now, identify later.

KOPPEL: Mr. Gerasimov? GERASIMOV: Well, I, I think one of the questions which also can be raised when we discuss this unfortunate episode is who profits from the whole thing? And certainly not the Soviets are. KIRKPATRICK: No one profits from the whole thing. And I mean this is a pure unadulterated tragedy in which 269 people lost their lives, in which a great many families are bereaved. No one profits at all. GERASIMOV: But to where lies the responsibility for this, Madam Ambassador? And if we're.... KIRKPATRICK: The responsibility lies with whomever shot down the plane. I think that's quite clear. GERASIMOV: Maybe responsibility lies with those who sent it into the Soviet airspace over very sensitive territory.

KOPPEL: Mr. Gerasimov, we're gonna have to take a break again, but before we do, I, I must ask you, you keep repeating the same rather *incidious suggestion that that was a spy plane. And I've asked you now on a couple of occasions, let me ask you one more time, what evidence other than just the, ah, I suppose the somewhat soothing effect that it has to you and to your colleagues to make the charge, what evidence do you have to support that charge? GERASIMOV: Well', I've already said, said so, answered you several questions.

KOPPEL: You've asked a answered of questions, but you've provided no evidence, and I'm asking you if there is any evidence, any concrete evidence to suggest that that

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plane was being used for espionage? GERASIMOV: There are certain unanswered questions. There is no very hard evidence.

KOPPEL: All right. Fine. Why don't we stop on that point for the moment, then? And we'll continue our discussion in a moment.

KOPPEL: (Nightline joined in progress)...how long will it be, what has to happen before that can be in a, in a somewhat pleasanter (sic) atmosphere? KIRKPATRICK: Well, I, you know, I don't know. I can tell you that I've talked to a number of, of American technical experts, military and civilian and others, federal aviation officials and so forth, about what needs to be done in order to try to make sure that no such tragic occurrence happens again. That's our goal. Our goal above all is to try to make certain that no, that this never happens again. There's general view among our technical experts that we don't really need new regulations, so much as we need implementation of the regulations that exist. There is an international board, which makes both rules and recommendations. And apparently most nations abide by those rules and recommendations and the Soviets don't. And the, the first and foremost goal would have to try to be to persuade the Soviets to live by civilized rules of behavior. And we need, we need to get them to change the notion that because an airliner is lost or strays into Soviet territory it oughta be shot down or it's their sovereign right to shoot it down is really shocking. There's no nation in the world that, ah, believes that.

KOPPEL: Let us assume for a moment, Madam Ambassdor, that Mr. Gerasimov in Moscow is an accurate barometer, that he reflects the Soviet government. KIRKPATRICK: Uh huh.

KOPPEL: Do you derive from anything he has said this evening the conclusion that anything is likely to change? KIRKPATRICK: I'm afraid I don't. And I also noted with real disappointment and dismay today that when the Soviet government finally did admit that they had shot down the airliner, and that was five days later, they also said that it was appropriate and it was carrying out an order and that it was implementing a new law which had just been put on the Soviet books in the last year, really seeming to affirm their right to shoot down any creature or vehicle that strays into their airspace. That's very discouraging for the rest of us, I think.

KOPPEL: Mr. Gerasimov, would it be fair to assume that any commerical airliner that strays into Soviet airspace may be assumed to by your pilots to be involved somehow in espyonage and therefore is subject to being shot down, or would you like to amend that in some way? GERASIMOV: I don't like this business of shooting planes down. And I must emphasize that Madam Ambassador is mistaken when she mentioned that it is just a lie that commerical airlines are not used for espionage purposes. First of all, the Soviet authorities say that, that they know about this. And I have no reason to disbelieve them. And second, I read about it in American press, for instance, San Francisco Examiner. And in this particular article, an official from Pentagon was quoting, who said something like this, that it's dangerous business because innocent people are involved.

KOPPEL: Well, I must say I'm, I'm moved by your addition to the accuracy of the American press. But I assure you that there are more articles in the American press these days that are condemning the Soviet Union for what has happened than those that excuse it. GERASIMOV: I can imagine that.

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KOPPEL: And I, I.... GERASIMOV: But I would like to make this point, maybe, while approaching the end of the program, and I would like to make this point. Let's imagine, was it possible, this particular accident, was it possible, if--that's a very big if--we had good relations and we trusted each other, so, I think this particular airline, with its unfortunate number, 007, was shot down, it was because it was a victim of the Cold War. If we had good relations, if we trusted each other, of course, this couldn't really happen.

KOPPEL: But maybe.... GERASIMOV: The underlying course, the underlying course of the whole thing is the international tension and the unfortunate side, very unfortunate side-effect of this particular catastrophe is that it is being used to increase this international tension even further, which is no good.

KOPPEL: It may be of some small comfort to you, Mr. Gerasimov, when I tell you that indeed Soviet aircraft and other aircraft from the Communist bloc have strayed over the United States during this period of great tension, as you describe it. And they have not been shot down. It is only your government that has chosen to respond that way. But let me turn to the question... GERASIMOV: They didn't identify.... KIRKPATRICK: They've also been shot down, they've also strayed over Japanese airspace and never been shot down and many other nations' airspace and never been shot down. GERASIMOV: They're identified as such, as civilian airline.

KOPPEL: No, no, no, we're talking also about military aircraft. Some of your military aircraft have actually flown into U.S. airspace. That, too, has appeared in the American press. I'm surprised you haven't read it. And they were not shot down. They were simply escorted out of the area, and indeed, some of the commercial airliners, they were denied certain rights for I believe, Madam Ambassador, 60 days, wasn't it? KIRKPATRICK: That's right.

KOPPEL: Now, let me, let me ask you, Mr. Gerasimov, the question that I addressed to Mrs. Kirkpatrick a moment ago. Where do you think, given the way things stand right now and given the apparent reluctance of the Soviet Union to apologize, where do you think U.S.-Soviet relations are headed? GERASIMOV: Well, they are at a very low point indeed. And as general secretary of the United Nations said recently. He's not in Portugal or was in Portugal two or thee days ago. He said something along these lines, that this particular accident should not be used to aggravate international tension, which is already very bad. And I think it's a very good position to approach the whole unfortunate thing. Because, you see, if we are going on a collision course, it increases the danger of a big nuclear confrontation, where there will be no winners. The underlying course of the whole thing is international tension, and if we... KIRKPATRICK: The underlying cause of the whole thing was the Soviet proclivity for using violence and then lying about it. GERASIMOV: So, let, you are, you are entitled to your opinion. But my opinion is the underlying cause is Soviet-American tension, and we must try somehow to go back to the years detente when we can trust each other more. And then these accidents will never happen.

KOPPEL: Mr. Gerasimov, let me just--you're right we are moving toward the end of this program--but let me tie up a few loose ends, if I may? Who gave the order, was it the military or was that order confirmed by civilians in Moscow? GERASIMOV: Sorry?

KOPPEL: Who gave the order to shoot down the plane? Was that a purely military order, a local, a regional commander? GERASIMOV: According, according, according to our information, local authorities.

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KOPPEL: Without referring it back to Moscow this, this decision was made? GERASIMOV: It is not mentioned in the statement, as afar as I know. I wasn't there on the scene, but in the statement of the Soviet government, it mentioned that the local authorities decided after, after failing to get into contact with this plane.

KOPPEL: Let me turn to you in your capacity as an analyst and a commentator. From what you know of the Soviet heirarchy and the military structure, do you think it is likely that this would have been done by a local commander at the local level? Or don't you think this would have been bumped up to a somewhat higher command? GERASIMOV: I don't really know. But I can imagine it was done on a local basis. It was a tonight, (sic) and, and I don't know really. I think it's quite possible.

KOPPEL: There has been a demand made by President Reagan, as you know, for compensation to be paid to the victims. You think that'll ever happen? GERASIMOV: Well, I'm not a legal expert, and, ah...

KOPPEL: To the families of the victims, I should say. GERASIMOV: The position of my govern is that the responsibility lies with those for sending this plane into the Soviet airspace. I don't know how the government will decide this legal aspect of the situation.

KOPPEL: Mrs. Kirkpatrick, a closing comment from you, please. KIRKPATRICK: I think it's very sad that the Soviet government even now can't admit the possibility that an airline strayed into their territory and got, as it were, lost there. They didn't know where they were. There's a classical response to that and that's to help out. You know the ship at sea that's off course or the airliner that strays. And there's a civilized response to it. And there's a civilized response, even if you're suspicious. And we very deeply regret that the Soviet Union has, even when it did not have civilized response, it had a very brutal, barbarous response. And even after having had the time to think it over, thinks it did the right thing in cooly murdering those 269 people.